

## Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 CCO-00 /026 R

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TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, MO, SS, SP, MR, AG, US

SUBJECT: ACTION MEMORANDUM - U.S. POLICY TOWARD SPANISH

SAHARA (S/S NO. 7513525 )

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM SISCO

1. YOU WILL RECALL THAT WE DISCUSSED BRIEFLY LAST WEEK AT THE STAFF MEETING THE QUESTION OF THE SPANISH SAHARA AND WHETHER WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE THE MOROCCANS TO TAKE UP THE SPANISH PROPOSAL FOR A FOUR-POWER CONFERENCE (SPAIN-MOROCCO-ALGERIA-MAURITANIA). AMBASSADOR NEUMANN SAW HASSAN LAST WEEK, AND WE INSTRUCTED HIM TO REMAIN STRICTLY NEUTRAL AND OFFER NO ENCOURAGEMENT OR DISCOURAGEMENT OF THE SPANISH IDEA. NEUMANN'S DISCUSSION WITH KING HASSAN WAS AGAINST THE BACKGROUND THAT FOR THE PAST MONTH OR SO HASSAN HAS BEEN PRESSING US AND THE FRENCH TO BECOME INVOLVED DIPLOMATICALLY, IN SOME UNSPECIFIED WAY, TO HELP EASE THE SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO THE SPANISH SAHARA.

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SO FAR WE HAVE MAINTAINED A STRICTLY HANDS OFF APPROACH.

2. IT IS CLEAR FROM NEUMANN'S LAST MEETING THAT HASSAN CONTINUES TO EXPECT SOMETHING FROM US AND WOULD LIKE US TO

BECOME INVOLVED DIPLOMATICALLY. WHAT HE HOPES, OF COURSE, IS THAT WE WILL LEND SUPPORT VIS-A-VIS SPAIN TO HIS TERRITORIAL CLAIM TO THE SAHARA AND URGE SPAIN TO COME TO AN AGREEMENT WITH MOROCCO, POSSIBLY INCLUDING MAURITANIA BUT EXCLUDING ALGERIA, WHICH WILL FINESSE THE SELF-DETERMINATION PROCEDURE CALLED FOR BY THE UN, SATISFY MOROCCO'S TERRITORIAL DEMANDS AND GIVE SPAIN CERTAIN CONTINUING ECONOMIC PRIVILEGES. WE COULD, OF COURSE, NOT DO THIS WITHOUT PUTTING OURSELVES SQUARELY IN THE MIDDLE OF A SPANISH-MOROCCAN-ALGERIAN-MAURITANIAN FIGHT. WE CONTINUE TO SEE NO U.S. INTEREST WHICH WOULD BE SERVED BY CHANGING OUR POLICY OF STRICT NEUTRALITY ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE SAHARA QUESTION OR BY LETTING OURSELVES BE DRAWN INTO THE NEGOTIATIONS ON THIS ISSUE.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, HASSAN HAS PRESSED REPEATEDLY FOR OUR ADVICE, AND CLEARLY BELIEVES THAT THE NATURE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP REQUIRES SOME RESPONSIVENESS ON OUR PART. WE ALSO HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THE SPANIARDS WHO HAVE FORMALLY ASKED US AT A HIGH LEVEL TO ENCOURAGE MOROCCAN ACCEPTANCE OF THEIR PROPOSAL AND HAVE REMINDED US (THROUGH THEIR AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON TUESDAY) THAT THEY ARE STILL AWAITING A REPLY. HASSAN'S BRINKMANSHIP, SPAIN'S CONCERN NOT TO OFFEND THE ALGERIANS, AND ALGERIAN DETERMINATION TO HAVE A VOICE IN THE RESOLUTION OF THE ISSUE HAVE PUT THE PARTIES ON A POSSIBLE COLLISION COURSE WHICH COULD LEAD TO A DETERIORATION OF THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND WITH ACCOMPANYING INSTABILITY IN THIS STRATEGIC CORNER OF NORTH AFRICA AND REPERCUSSIONS, EVEN IF WE CONTINUE OUR HANDS-OFF POLICY, FOR OUR RELATIONS WITH ALL THE PARTIES AND OUR INTERESTS THERE. I AM CONCERNED THAT WE NOT OVERLOOK ANY OPPORTUNITY TO DIVERT THE PARTIES FROM THIS COURSE IF WE CAN DO SO WITHOUT GETTING OURSELVES INTO THE MIDDLE OF THE PROBLEM IN THE PROCESS.

4. NEUMANN'S LATEST MESSAGE (RABAT 3137 BEING REPEATED SEPARATELY TO YOU) GIVES HIS JUDGMENT THAT, IN THE ABSENCE  
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OF ANYTHING BETTER AND REGARDLESS OF THE DIFFICULTIES IT MAY POSE, THERE SEEMS TO BE SOME INTEREST ON THE PART OF HASSAN IN NOT CLOSING THE DOOR ON THE SPANISH PROPOSAL.

5. WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE IN OUR INTEREST TO GO BACK TO HASSAN AND SAY THE FOLLOWING TO HIM:

A. AS HE KNOWS, WE HAVE MAINTAINED AND WILL CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN STRICT NEUTRALITY WITH RESPECT TO THE SUBSTANCE OF THIS ISSUE:

B. KING HASSAN HAS ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS ASKED US TO BE HELPFUL IN TRYING TO GET SOME NEGOTIATIONS STARTED.

WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF OUR POSTURE OF NEUTRALITY, WE WANT TO BE AS HELPFUL AS WE CAN SINCE, AS HE KNOWS, WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION ACHIEVED OF THE SPANISH SAHARA QUESTION WHICH WILL CONTRIBUTE TO LONG-RUN STABILITY THERE.

C. WE DO NOT HAVE ANY DEFINITIVE VIEWS AS TO HOW WE MIGHT BE HELPFUL. WE ARE AWARE, HOWEVER, OF THE SPANISH PROPOSAL FOR A FOUR-POWER CONFERENCE. OUR ONLY THOUGHT IS HASSAN MIGHT WISH TO GIVE SPANISH PROPOSAL SOME CONSIDERATION AS A WAY OF DEFUSING THE SITUATION AND POSSIBLY DILUTING THE ALGERIAN ROLE. IF THIS IDEA COMMENDED ITSELF TO HIS MAJESTY, WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO EXPRESS HOPE TO SPANISH THAT THEY AVOID A PRECIPITATE WITHDRAWAL FROM THE SAHARA, WHICH AS HIS MAJESTY RECOGNIZES WOULD CREATE A DANGEROUS VACUUM IN THE AREA.

6. WE RECOGNIZE THAT COURSE OF ACTION IN PARAGRAPH 5 ABOVE RAISES NUMBER OF POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: IT WOULD NOT SATISFY APPARENT HOPES OF KING HASSAN FOR U.S. INTERVENTION WITH SPANISH THAT WOULD FAVOR MOROCCO'S CAMPAIGN TO ANNEX SAHARA OR AT LEAST NORTHERN PART OF TERRITORY (WITH MAURITANIA TAKING SOUTHERN PART). KING MIGHT REGARD U.S. SUGGESTION THAT HE CONSIDER SPANISH FOUR-POWER CONFERENCE OR UN CONTEXT FOR DIPLOMATIC PROCESS AS PREJUDICIAL TO MOROCCO'S ANNEXATIONIST PLANS. IN FACT, NEGOTIATING PROCESS INVOLVING ALGERIA AND MOROCCO ON EQUAL BASIS WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO LEAD TO OUTCOME DESIRED  
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BY MOROCCO. IF KING ACCEPTS OUR ADVICE AND ENTERS FOUR-POWER NEGOTIATIONS, HE MAY LATER TRY TO PLACE SOME RESPONSIBILITY ON US FOR OUTCOME OF TALKS. IN ADDITION, BOTH MOROCCO AND SPAIN COULD SEEK TO DRAW US INTO SUBSTANCE OF NEGOTIATIONS, BUT WE WOULD HAVE MADE CLEAR AT OUTSET WE WILL NOT TAKE SUBSTANTIVE POSITION AND SHOULD FIRMLY RESIST ANY INITIATIVES BY MADRID OR RABAT TO GET US SUBSTANTIALLY INVOLVED. THIS COULD PLACE SOME STRAIN ON OUR RELATIONS WITH MOROCCO BUT, SINCE GOM IS LOOKING TO U.S. FOR CONTINUED ARMS SUPPLIES, CONCESSIONARY WHEAT SALES AND INCREASED INVESTMENT, WE BELIEVE THAT KING WILL KEEP ANY SUCH STRAIN WITHIN LIMITS.

7. IN MY JUDGMENT, DISADVANTAGES OF DOING NOTHING OUTWEIGH FOREGOING CONSIDERATIONS. MODEST COURSE OF ACTION I HAVE SUGGESTED WOULD BE RESPONSIVE TO HASSAN'S REQUEST FOR OUR ADVICE; IT DOES NOT HELP OUR RELATIONS WITH HIM TO BE TOTALLY NON-RESPONSIVE. WHILE IT DOES NOT GIVE HIM SUBSTANTIVE SUPPORT HE WOULD LIKE, IT WOULD PROVIDE FACE-SAVING WAY OUT OF CORNER HE HAS GOT HIMSELF INTO IF HE IN FACT SEEKS THIS AND GIVES HIM OUR SUPPORT WITH

SPAIN TO AVOID PRECIPITATE WITHDRAWAL. IN ADDITION, IT

WOULD RESPOND POSITIVELY TO DIRECT SPANISH REQUEST TO U.S., DEMONSTRATE U.S. CONCERN TO AVOID SHOWDOWN BETWEEN TWO FRIENDS (TO BOTH OF WHOM WE ARE MAJOR ARMS SUPPLIER), AND GAIN US SOME CREDIT FROM ALGERIANS WHEN THEY LEARNED OF IT AS THEY ALMOST CERTAINLY WOULD.

8. IF YOU AGREE TO OUR PROCEEDING ALONG FOREGOING LINES, WE WILL PREPARE AN APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTION TO AMBASSADOR NEUMANN, DEFERRING A RESPONSE TO THE SPANISH REQUEST TO US UNTIL WE HAVE HAD HASSAN'S REACTION. APPROVE DISAPPROVE. SISCO

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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 26 AUG 1999  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, TOSEC, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, NEGOTIATIONS, SELFDETERMINATION  
**Control Number:** S7513525  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 04 JUL 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** greeneet  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1975STATE158651  
**Document Source:** ADS  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** P:JJSISCO:NEA:ALATHERTON:NEA/AFN:JVMONTVILLE  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** 11652 GDS  
**Errors:** n/a  
**Film Number:** D750231-1093  
**From:** STATE  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
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**Office:** ORIGIN SS  
**Original Classification:** SECRET  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** EXDIS  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Page Count:** 4  
**Previous Channel Indicators:**  
**Previous Classification:** SECRET  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** EXDIS  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** greeneet  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 18 JUN 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <18 JUN 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <03 DEC 2003 by greeneet>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
06 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** n/a  
**TAGS:** PFOR, PBOR, MO, SS, SP, MR, AG, US  
**To:** SECRETARY  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006